

Special Exhibitions

October 2013

Interwoven Globe: The Worldwide Textile Trade, 1500–1800

Tisch Galleries (899)

Textiles had been traded between Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe for hundreds of years, primarily along lengthy overland routes. In the mid-fifteenth century, the fragmentation of the Mongol Empire triggered heightened instability along the vast Silk Road. European trade with Asia also suffered after 1453, when the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople. In the face of these disruptions, Europeans set sail in search of an ocean route to the Spice Islands of Southeast Asia and found valuable exotic textiles along the way. The newly discovered sea routes directly connecting Europe to the rest of the world enabled the creation of the first truly global trading community. As Europeans found that textiles were welcome currency for other goods, the scope of the textile trade expanded significantly. Trade textiles, which, by definition, were produced by one culture to be sold to another, often reveal a conglomeration of design and technical features. Highly accessible, these popular cloths influenced the material culture of the locations where they were marketed and produced, resulting in a common visual language of design recognizable around the world.

Julia Margaret Cameron

Gilman Gallery (852)

One of the greatest portraitists in the history of photography, Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879) blended an unorthodox technique, a deeply spiritual sensibility, and a Pre-Raphaelite-inflected aesthetic to create a gallery of vivid portraits and a mirror of the Victorian soul. This will be the first New York City museum exhibition devoted to Cameron's work in nearly a generation, and the first ever at the Met. The showing of thirty-five works is drawn entirely from the Metropolitan's rich collection, including major works from the Rubel Collection acquired in 1997 and the Gilman Collection acquired in 2005.

Artists and Amateurs: Etching in Eighteenth-Century France

Cohen, Offin, and Levine Galleries (691–693)

Throughout the eighteenth century, a large number of artists—painters, sculptors, draftsmen, and amateurs—experimented with etching, a highly accessible printmaking technique akin to drawing. Some, like Antoine Watteau and François

Boucher, encountered the process within the thriving commerce of the Paris print market. Others, like Jean-Honoré Fragonard and Hubert Robert, experimented with the technique during their student years in Rome. Over the course of the century, the free and improvisational aesthetic of the etching process increasingly was embraced, and French artists looked to seventeenth-century masters, such as Rembrandt in the north, and Salvator Rosa and Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione to the south, for inspiration.

Balthus: Cats and Girls—Paintings and Provocations

Cantor Exhibition Hall (999)

Balthus is best known for his series of pensive adolescents who dream or read in rooms that are closed to the outside world. Focusing on his finest works, the exhibition will be limited to approximately thirty-five paintings dating from the mid-1930s to the 1950s. Between 1936 and 1939, Balthus painted his celebrated series of portraits of Thérèse Blanchard, his young neighbor in Paris. When Balthus lived in Switzerland during World War II, he replaced the forbidding austerity of his Paris studio with more colorful interiors in which different nymphets daydream, read, or nap. The exhibition concludes with images that he created of Frédérique Tison, at the Château de Chassy in the Morvan during the 1950s. Never before shown in public will be the series of forty small ink drawings for Mitsou, in which the eleven-year-old Balthus evoked his adventures with a stray tomcat and which were published by the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke in 1921.

Medieval Treasures from Hildesheim

Gallery 521 (near the Lehman Wing)

Hildesheim Cathedral has one of the most complete surviving ensembles of church furnishings and treasures in Europe, with many masterpieces made between 1000 and 1250. A major renovation of the cathedral provides an opportunity for this extraordinary exhibition of medieval church treasures. Consisting of about fifty works, the exhibition focuses primarily on Bishop Bernward of Hildesheim (960–1022), one of the greatest patrons of the arts in the Middle Ages. Bernward commissioned many smaller precious works of art, mostly for his monastic foundation St. Michael's. A silver crucifix and candlesticks and numerous illuminated manuscripts (that he is known to have commissioned), and the Golden Madonna (that he is believed to have commissioned), are part of the exhibition.

Legends of the Dead Ball Era (1900–1919)

Gallery 773, American Wing, Mezzanine level

This selection of baseball cards from the collection of Jefferson R. Burdick includes such Hall of Famers as Ty Cobb, Honus Wagner, Tris Speaker, Eddie Collins, and Napoléon Lajoie—who are still among the all-time hit leaders—and the pitchers Walter Johnson and Christy Mathewson, who trail only the indomitable Cy Young in career wins. The exhibition also includes outstanding players who were never inducted to the Hall of Fame such as Smoky Joe Wood and Shoeless Joe Jackson, whose hard-hitting career ended abruptly after the 1919 scandal in which Chicago White Sox players participated in a conspiracy to fix the World Series.

Italian Renaissance and Baroque Bronze Sculpture from the Lehman Collection

Gallery 960, Lehman Wing

Featuring bronze casts after models created by masters such as Severo da Ravenna and Desiderio da Firenze, this selection includes independent figural statuettes as well as functional objects created in key centers of Italian bronze production, in particular Padua and Venice. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, bronze statuettes were generally displayed in private studies, where they were accompanied by functional aids to scholarship such as inkwells, writing boxes, and candleholders. The scholars who inhabited these studies often had a profound interest in classical antiquity. Thus, it is unsurprising that classicizing motifs and figures from Greco-Roman mythology abound in these small works in bronze.